Abyssinia lies between 8 & 15° of N. Latitude
And between 35 & 40° East longitude from Greenwich
Making it - in round numbers 800 miles long
& 600 broad, embracing within its limits a population
of 4.000.000. It is bounded on the N by
Nubia & Sennaar, small kingdoms in South
Egypt. East by the Red Sea & Bay of Ballemandel
on the south by Adel and on the West
by Nigritia & Sennaar.

Before entering upon an account of the
Country, I would mention that there
are only 3 places along the shore of Abyssinia
at which a landing can be effected with
safety. The 1st is at Rachma, latitude nearly
14°. There the anchorage is not good, and would
not be safe with any other than a South wind.
The 2nd is in Amphila Bay, nearly 15° N. L. This
bay comprises an extent of 16 miles along the coast,
and is nearly 12 miles deep. It contains 18
islands, which seem to be composed of
maine alluvies, strongly cemented together.
The anchorage in this bay seems to be good & safe.
The 3rd place of landing is at Massowa, the
extreme north of Abyssinia. The anchorage here
is tolerably good, but some dangerous shoals
are to be passed, which lie south of it.
The country around Amphila forms part
of an extensive tract formerly called the
kingdom of Dankali. The inhabitants are nearly
allied in their language & manners to the Adiel tribe.
The coast seemes to be possessed by 14 or 15
different tribes, the most important of these is
the tribe of Dumhoeta, their fighting men are

computed at 1000. Some of these tribes are employed in a sea faring life, others attend to the raising of cattle &c.

But what is an interesting fact, the whole of these 15 tribes living along the coast, speak the same language, or so near the same, that if one is well understood it is all that is requisite, this Language is called the Dankali. Though these tribes are governed by distinct rulers, yet they are all ready at a short notice, to unite in a common cause, & their whole forces are said to amount to full 6000 men which number would render them a formidable enemy were it not for their want of arms, their poverty not allowing more than one in ten to possess a spear, a knife or any other weapon of offence. They seeme from what Mr Salt says, to be daring, resolute & active. They profess the religion of Mohamed of which however they know but little more than the name. There are neither Priests nor Mosques among these tribes, a fact which should cheer the hearts of all who wish to see christian churches built up on these distant shores.

The women on the cost possess very pleasing and agreeable features, and are hospitable, so far as their poverty will admit.

Of every article of sustanence, an extreme scarcity seems to prevail along the cost, Indeed no people in the world are more scantily with regard to the necessaries of life. A little Juwary bread, a small quantity of fish, & an inadequate supply of goats & camels milk, & on rare occasions a bird, constitutes the whole of their sustenance.

But this fact, instead of militating against missionary operations, would perhaps be favourable to them, because as a general thing, the poor are more accessible than the rich, farther in from the coast, where they have large droves of cattle, they are more haughty & vicious.

There is a raining season here once a year, (Perhaps in ~~May~~ March, as this corresponds to the over-flowing of the Nile.) But there is little or no attention paid to the cultivation of the soil, so they may be called strictly a pastoral people.

All the natives both men and women have an extraordinary craving for tobacco, they smoke & snuff, & are in the habitual practice of chewing it.

The dress of the men consists of a single piece ~~of~~ of Abyssinian cloth loosly raped round the body. Their hair frizzed, powdered with brown dust & covered with greare.

The dress of the women is somewhat more modest — than that of the men though not very appropriate to their sex, part of it being formed of a close covering resembling a species of drawers, the edges of which are ornamented with shells.

Their hair is plated ~~in~~ into small ringlets, & their arms and legs are adorned with braclets of ivory and silver. The drudgery of the house is allotted to the women, while the males pass their time in tending their cattle, or more frequently in smoking & idleness.

Their huts are constructed much like our

Indian wigwams, and are covered with leaves of the doom-tree. Their furniture consists of a few rude couches, some cooking utensils, & a large jar for holding water.

When a marriage takes place, which occasions great rejoicing, an intoxicating kind liquor is used, called booza, and the foot of a bird is cut off and hung up in the house of the chief, as a calender to mark the event.

These people in the eastern part of Abyssinia have an utter abhorrence for the flesh of common fowls, which gives rise to the opinion that these tribes along the coast have an egyptian origin. This also is somewhat confirmed from their raising monuments of a Pyramidal structure over their dead.

These remarks apply principly to eastern Abyssinia who are entirely different from those of the middle and western parts of Abyssinia.

Abyssinia proper.

The general face of the country is beautiful, being diversified with most of the grand features of nature such as mountains, hills, vallies, forests & plains, exhibiting almost all the variety of landscape found on the world. Mountains are numerous, and some of them high & precipitous, the mountains of Lamalon near the centre of the kingdom are the highest.

The principle river is the Abyssinian Nile. It rises in the interior in two lakes, & in fact is the principle source of the great nile. The natives pay divine honours, and offer sacrifice to the Spirit supposed to reside at its source.

Another branch of the Nile called angrab has its source in the North of Abyssinia. There is also another

considerable river in the South, called Hanash. On the whole Abyssinia seemes to be a well-watered country, if we may judge from the many deep streams marked by the salt & others, & some places are rendered desireable by the bursting forth of large and delightful springs. There are several Lakes, the principle of which is Dgana which is 60 miles by 30, but it decreases much during the dry seasons.

Some Gold is found in the beds of Rivers & there are some mines, but the natives seem to pay but little attention to them, for fear the Turks should be instigated by avarice to invade their country.

The soil as is common in mountainous countries displays many varieties. & great part of it in the valleys is a rich black mould, in other part it is sandy, marshy or rocky.

The climate of Abyssinia owing to its peculiar situation & elevation, and long rainy seasons, is not so appropriately warm as most of the countries within the tropics, the ground is almost perpetually cool, and sometimes disagreeably cold to the feet.

The vegitable productions are very numerous. and grow to great perfection, especialy wheat. Nearly all the tropical fruits are found here.

And it is thought that no country in the world surpasses, and very few equal Abyssinia in quadrupeds & fowls, nearly all that naturalists have taken notice of are here to be found. The country also abounds with insects, many of which are a scourge to all animals. There is only one that I will mention as being very remarkable, which is a large fly, the sting of which is so terrible that even

the thick hide of the camel is unable to resist the violence of its puncture, as soon as this tremendous fly is ~~heard~~ appears, or its buzzing is heard, all animate nature is agitated with terror, even the Lion himself flies with trepidation.

As to curiosities there is only one worth mentioning, which is a rival to our Niagara falls. The Nile half a mile wide falls in an unbroken sheet of water from a height of 50 or 60 feet, with a noise which stuns all in its vicinity.

There are some antiquities, especialy those among the ruins of Axum, which show that the fine arts were once cultivated in Abyssinia

There are only 4 Cities or towns of any note in this kingdom. Gondar the capital, it contains about 10.000 houses, built mostly of clay & thacked with reeds, of a conical form. Inhabitants about 40.000, Its Latitude N. is 12°.34'. Longitude E from Greenwich 37°.33'. The Palace is surrounded with a strong stone wall

Axum the next town has already been noticed

The 3d is Dixan, Remarkable only for its singular situation, & the infamous trafic carried on by its inhabitants. Eta is situated on the top of conical hill, a road winds spirally up the hill, which forms the only approach to the town The inhabitants are a mixture of Mohamedans & Christians, and their only trade is that of selling children. The christians bring here such as they have stolen in the kingdom and the Mohamedans receiving them, take them to the market at Massuah, whence they are taken to Arabia & other Countries. The Priests in the province of Tigre are openly engaged in this horrible trafic.

It is trifling with time for us to track the history of this country. They ascribe their origin to ~~the~~ Solomon by the Queen of Sheba, (they say that) when she made her long & tedious journey to see the wisdom of Solomon. ~~That~~ she there reigned over Abyssinia, & had a son to Solomon after her return, and It is received as a fact that the Abyssinians did receive Judaism about this time, and Josephus in his antiquities accounts for it in the above mentioned way. And it is said that this empire continued the seat of Judaism for 2 centuries after it was extinct in Palestine. The 333rd year of our era is the time when it was first converted to christianity; and it is generaly believed that this event was brot about by the labours of Frumentius, the disciple of Athanasius, who then sat in the chair of St Mark at Alexandria If this be true, it would of course make them to have adopted the christianity of the time of Constantine the great.

In the year 680 The Abyssinians embraced the Monophysite heresy of Egypt. This reception of Christianity did fare to raise them far above the level of the barbarous kingdoms of Africa. But the Arabians at this ~~time~~ interesting period overran Syria & Egypt. Thus the Abyssinians in the infancy of christianity, were surrounded by the enemies of their religion, and being shut up in this remote part of Africa, they remained unknown to the world for 800 years. Their religion not being entirely pure at 1st became grosly corrupted, their arts & commerce were extinguished, and they had fallen back almost into a state of barbarity, when

they were found by the Portugeese in the beginning of the 16th cent. These last professing themselves to be Christians, were received as brothers by the Abyssinians, again this long lost people began to rise, like the luxuriant sprout from a decayed trunk. The portugese eager of gain, insinuated themselves into the government, an interchange of embassies took place between shores of the Red Sea & the banks of the Tagus & Tiber, the arts & sciences began to be cultivated, and would doubtless have succeeded, had not the Beast at Rome set forth its clover foot, where it had no right. The dispute was whether the Pope or the Alexandrian patriarch should be the head of the Abyssinian church, to settle this, rivers of blood were spilled, some of the natives themselves were converted to Popery, which produced persecutions & civil wars. The Jesuits appeared on the ground, true to the Mother of Harlots, but for their insolence were soon banished from Abyssinia. And after a half a centuries struggle, the Portugeese, were compelled to "take shipping and depart into their own country." and with them went all the anathemas that the natives could heap upon the Christian name. From this time the Abyssinians rapedly declined towards a state of barbarism. The Coptic Patriarch is still the head of the church, but its doctrines as well as its morals are entirely corrupted. They have at this time many both of the Jewish & Mahomedan rites. They both circumcise & baptize, receive the eucharist in both kinds. These things are with them merely an outward ceremony. Fifteen centuries has had but little effect on their morals & manners.

among the Christians polygamy is much practiced and what is strange, if the husband commits a crime, the wife is punished. They have a great predilection for raw flesh.

The Ethiopic or Abyssinian version of the old testament was made in the 2nd cent, that of the new Testament in the 4th. but this being in the Coptic was but little understood by the people.

We have now given a brief outline of the Geography, history & moral condition of Abyssinia. We have seen them struggling between light and darkness since the days of Solomon, at one time almost persuaded to be Christians, and at another verging on a state of barbarity. There are two important truths to be learned from their history, which those who carry the light to heathen lands should never forget.

I. That the common people surrounded by barbarians must be made familiar with the Bible in their own language, otherwise corruption will blast every effort to do good.

II. That every missionary, wherever he goes, should erect fortifications against the Beast of Rome. It is believed that facts would bear us out in saying, that it is more demoralizing than Mohamadanism itself. Had it not been for the intrigues of the Pope, Abyssinia, once anxious & groping for the true light of Christianity, might long ere this have been sending forth missionaries, & Christianizing other degraded parts of the world. But the Jesuits have left behind them a curse on the

Christian name, which perhaps will for years be almost the only serious barrier to the success of missionaries

It is delightful for us to know that the British foreign bible society has now translated the bible into the native language of Abyssinia

Two Missionaries, messrs Gobat & Kugler are now in the kingdom, under the care of the Church Miss. Soc. The latest accounts say that they have been favourably received by the Ras or governor. They seem to be devoted men and have addressed themselves to the work with much zeal & fortitude.

They have established themselves in the centre of the kingdom, are composing books and teaching schools, with more success than the friends of the mission had expected. They bless God that they were ever induced to leave friends & home, to seek the salvation of these perishing people.

May we not look upon, and pray for this mission with faith? We see now the name of Abyssinia connected with that of England. And what may we not expect from this eastern side of Africa, should it please the great head of the church to revive his blessed work in those regions, & remember his ancient mercies on their behalf.

A population equal to that of Va, the two Carolinas & Georgia, is surely an object worthy of our highest hopes, and especially at this critical time it needs our fervent prayers.

For confirmation of the facts in this essay, see Salt's travels in Abyssinia. Mosheims Ch. history. Josephus's Antiquities. Bigland's view of the world. Missionary register (London.) Missionary Herald (U.S.)

Abyssinia

March 1832

S. W. Barr

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